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Press Release

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NC COASTAL FEDERATION CELEBRATES COASTAL RESTORATION MILESTONE

Ocean, NC: Today, the North Carolina Coastal Federation (NCCF) garnered high-level praise from federal and state officials as they helped Restore America's Estuaries celebrate the completion of its 500th project with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Community-based Restoration Program.

"We're celebrating the project and the partnerships that made the restoration of North River Farm and other successful projects possible," said Sarah King, who directs restoration activities at the farm for NCCF. King went on to say, "Together we can improve water quality and habitat in a way we couldn't do alone. We look forward to celebrating many more successful partnership projects down the road."

Nearly 100 people gathered at North River Farm to celebrate the successful completion of more than 500 coastal habitat restoration projects. These projects are the result of a highly successful partnership between the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Community-based Restoration Program and Restore America's Estuaries (RAE). As the site of North Carolina's largest wetland restoration project, North River Farms provided an ideal venue.

"This watershed-scale project will have incredible benefits for North Carolina's marine resources," said Timothy Keeney, NOAA's Deputy Assistant Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere and a featured speaker. "NOAA is proud to be a part of this monumental effort."

Other speakers included RAE's Vice President Steve Emmett-Mattox, Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Bill Ross, and Clean Water Management Trust Fund (CWMTF) Executive Director Bill Holman. Each spoke of the importance of habitat restoration, and of the national, regional, state, university and local partnerships that NCCF has created with the North River Farm projects.

After a traditional covered dish luncheon prepared by the Core Sound Waterfowl Museum and an informal chat between the speakers and community members, NCCF staff led a tour of North River Farm restoration sites. Student volunteers from Morehead Middle School and UNC-Chapel Hill's Environmental Program were on-site planting silky dogwood trees and giving the visitors a firsthand look at hands-on restoration.

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North River Farm is made up of 6,000 acres of land stretching from Jarrett Bay to the North River. The ecosystem-based restoration project combines restoration efforts in the watershed with projects in the adjacent rivers and creeks, all designed to address water quality degradation and habitat loss. Projects include the restoration of forested wetlands, tidal and freshwater wetlands, streams, floodplains, and oyster reefs. A total of 550 acres have been restored to date, with 230 additional acres planned for the coming year. The remaining areas of the farm are under conservation easement and will be restored in coming years.

One of NCCF's goals is to return the tidal creeks that flow out of North River Farm to health. And with almost 200 acres adjacent to the restoration project being reopened to shellfishing by the state last year, indications are that this project is working toward accomplishing that goal.

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